

## CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS.

A. B. GNAGEY.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Isa. 35: 1.

A great many blessings flow from the birth of Jesus; and these words of the prophet Isaiah foretell great prosperity to the church. They tell us the condition of the world without the Gospel; and they tell us of the change which the Gospel produces.

The world without the Gospel is a "wilderness," a "desert," and a "solitary place." The bright promise of the spring, the warm showers of summer, the rich harvests of autumn, and the quiet repose of winter, are full of beauty; yet all this is but a wilderness, a desert, and a solitary place to the spiritual eye, and when separated from the Gospel. And if this is the case in our own fair country, which is the grandest and noblest of all countries, what shall we say then of the heathen nations? How about China, with its countless millions? How about India, with its "gods many and lords many?" How about Africa, with its "chains and slavery?" How about the islands of the sea, with their piracy and cannibalism? Men have broken themselves away from God, and naturally they do not seem to desire any knowledge concerning his ways. The world is overspread by sin and it has been tried and found "guilty before God." There is nothing to uphold the divine life, to secure spiritual health, to promote the eternal welfare of the soul.

This is but a commentary on the language of the prophet, that the world, apart from the Gospel, is a wilderness, a desert and a solitary place.

What is this change which the Gospel brings about? This change is the same to one and all when it comes with "demonstration of the Spirit and with power." The Gospel finds men, as we have stated, careless of the things that are absolutely necessary in order that they may have peace, "led captive by Satan at his will," full of pride and jealousy and prejudice and selfishness; and it causes conviction of sin, it leads him to the foot of the cross, it makes dear the Savior, it creates a spirit of prayer, it inspires all "holy desires, good counsel and just works." Thus we notice that the results of the introduction of the Gospels are: all things become new and the man is turned "from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It is true that what the Gospel does in one case it will do in others. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Recklessness is laid away, knowledge takes the place of ignorance, the cold and selfish and indifferent heart becomes warmed, the "fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, and peace,"—spring up, the desolate place and the wilderness is made glad, and the desert is made to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Have our hearts been made glad by the Gospel? Do we know and comprehend

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ears?"

These are very important questions, and should be asked by every professing Christian, and the answer should be a matter of praise and prayer. What are we doing to make the hearts of those who are about us glad? In what way am I hindering or helping the spread of the Gospel? These are questions which demand our prompt attention, for—the time is very short. The last day of this another year has well nigh dawned. Let us all join as one and work together "while it is called to-day; for the night cometh, in which no man can work."

## THE GRAND REVIEW.

J. J. VANDERREE.

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Job 1: 1. He it was that uttered these words. I am as one mocked of his neighbor, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him. The just, upright man is laughed to scorn. He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly." Job 12: 4, 5, 6.

He also said this: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Job. 14: 1.

It is true that some have their troubles here, and many there be, that will have their troubles in the hereafter. Christ our blessed Master has left us word just before he went away from this earth to prepare us a home over yonder, that if they persecuted him they would also persecute us, and make us all the trouble they could while it was in the power of our enemy to do so. Many, yea, very many poor souls could testify to this fact. We meet with many things with which we are not prepared to cope, only by Divine help from him who has promised to carry us through the stormy voyage of life to the haven of rest. Jesus is the way, and in him we cannot be lost. What a glorious thing it is for us that God cannot lie.

Consequently his promises will stand through all eternity.

But while it is a fact that we are passing through this world, it is only to some day hear the voice of the great commander *halt*. We are here like children going to school, to prepare ourselves for a final examination, when the righteous judge of all heaven and earth will demand of each one of us a strict account of our stewardship here below, and we will come up for a *grand review* to be passed upon by one that knows all, even the secrets of our hearts. Oh, then, where will the robber with all his booty appear? Will he be among those who in their poverty with a heart full of love for fallen humanity's sake went and visited the sick, or clothed the ragged urchin, or fed the poor, hungry tramp that came begging for a morsel of bread to his humble cottage door, or visited the poor outcast for Christ's sake in the dark and dismal prison? I fear not.

But, dear brethren and sisters, when that great and grand review shall take place will you and I pass muster? That is the question that confronts us just now, and will also then. If we will stand the test happy will we be. If not, then what?

But this grand review will not be all that will concern us just then. No indeed. For immediately after that, a *grand reunion* will take place in the palace of our king where we can see again those loved ones who have now gone on before, and those that will follow us. Will you be there? Will I be there? May the Lord in his mercy grant that we may, and all ours as well. We should always remember that if we should be found without a wedding garment that we will be cast into outer darkness. There shall be wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But if we are found clad in a white garment, washed in the blood of the Lamb of God, then in addition we shall receive as a badge a sparkling diadem and a crown of righteousness bestowed upon us, not by any earthly potentate, but by the royal Son of God, our great Redeemer whom we now in our poverty adore. And this all, because he laid down his life for us, and we did in his sight the things which he commanded us to do. Does not our heart cry out, God hasten that day?

"When this passing world is done,  
When has sunk yon glaring sun,  
When we stand with Christ at last,  
Looking o'er life's journey past,  
Then, Lord, shall I fully know,  
Not till then how much I owe."

Cornell, Ills.